



Afternoon Alert - Friday, March 16, 2018

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HEADLINES

Noon news

Fuji TV led with a report on a Washington Post story saying that President Trump is allegedly ready to dismiss his national security adviser McMaster. NHK, TBS, and NTV gave top play to updates on the Moritomo Gakuen scandal. TV Asahi led with a report that the opposition parties returned to the Diet for the first time in 11 days.

ECONOMY

FM Kono asks USTR to exclude Japan from tariffs on steel imports

NHK reported on its website that Foreign Minister Kono met with USTR Lighthizer in Washington on Friday. The network said Kono asked Lighthizer to exclude Japan from the planned tariff measures on steel and aluminum imports by saying that "steel and aluminum from Japan do not have a negative impact on U.S. security" and that the impact of the measures on Japanese companies and global trade would be huge. According to MOFA, the USTR did not give a clear response.

President Trump expresses frustration with non-tariff barriers in Japan, ROK

NHK reported this morning that according to the Washington Post, President Trump spoke to supporters on Wednesday in Missouri and expressed strong dissatisfaction over U.S. trade imbalances with not only China but also its allies such as Japan and South Korea, adding that the President's stance on reducing the U.S. trade deficit is becoming more pronounced ahead of the midterm elections in November. According to the network, the President reportedly said that although Japan does not buy American products, the U.S. buys Japanese cars, and said that there are non-tariff barriers in the Japanese auto market. The President also reportedly stressed that he will press South Korea to rectify the trade imbalance by threatening to reduce the number of U.S. troops in South Korea.

- [GOJ and five major power companies to discuss joint construction of Higashidori nuclear power plant](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Ruling parties to start substantial discussions on IR implementing law next week](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Japan to open its skies to commercial drones](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Japan's home-sharing registrations off to a rocky start](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Ministry to facilitate new drug development by allowing use of existing clinical test data](#) (Nikkei)
- [Japan's nuclear export to Turkey in doubt as costs estimate doubles](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)
- [Japan parliament OKs BOJ chief Kuroda's reappointment, new deputies](#) (Kyodo News)

INTERNATIONAL

PACOM commander urges caution on North Korea

NHK reported this morning that PACOM Commander Harris called for a cautious approach to the U.S.-DPRK summit that might be held by May during a congressional hearing on Thursday.

According to the network, the admiral said that the U.S.'s goal is to achieve the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and warned against being "overly optimistic" about the outcome of the summit. "We must go into this with eyes wide open," he was quoted as saying. The admiral reportedly analyzed that the North Korean leader is aiming for the reunification of the Korean Peninsula and that he believes that the possession of nuclear weapons has raised his status and increased his security. The admiral also reportedly said that the U.S. has no "bloody-nose strategy" and denied that such a strategy is being contemplated.

UN panel chief says North Korea is "clever" at evading sanctions

NHK reported on its one-on-one interview with Hugh Griffiths, who heads the United Nations Panel of Experts monitoring the UN sanctions on North Korea. He reportedly said that North Korea is "clever" at evading sanctions and the panel is asking the petroleum industry and private firms such as shipping insurance companies not to get involved in deals with North Korea.

He was quoted as saying: "They are clever, they are innovative, and they make full use of what's out there for them." Griffith also reportedly pointed out that challenges include how to prevent ship-to-ship transfers of petroleum products at sea, financial transactions via shell companies, and North Korea's exports of military hardware to conflict-ridden countries.

- [Aso's G-20 absence a blow to Japan](#) (Sankei)
- [Aso to skip G-20 meeting](#) (The Japan News)
- [Japan, U.S. to coordinate N. Korea policies ahead of Trump-Kim summit](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Editorial: U.S. must expedite steps for N. Korea talks despite top diplomat change](#) (The Japan News)
- [Cartoon: Abe and DPRK](#) (Akahata)

POLITICS

- [Prime minister's schedule on March 15, 2018](#) (Nikkei)
- [LDP sets up team to probe Moritomo Gakuen affair](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Prime Minister's Office was told about original Moritomo documents on March 5, Suga says](#) (The Japan Times)
- [Cartoon: Twin scandals](#) (Kanagawa Shimbun)
- [FM Kono uses chartered plane for visit to the U.S.](#) (Mainichi)
- [Editorial: Thoroughness lacking in LDP's Article 9 amendment debate](#) (The Mainichi)

SCIENCE

- [National hospital begins Japan's first clinical trials for cancer treatment using light](#) (Nikkei, Evening edition)

SOCIETY

- [Supreme Court breaks new ground, ruling in favor of U.S.-based Japanese father in international custody battle](#) (The Japan Times)
- [Gov't mulls abolishing political fairness clause in broadcasting law](#) (Kyodo News)

SECURITY

- [LDP to urge gov't to possess capability to strike enemy bases](#) (Kyodo News)

OKINAWA LOCAL PRESS

- [Onaga seeks lesser base-hosting burden, but USG official says "It's a domestic issue"](#) (Okinawa Times)
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